

**Remarks of Mayor Paul Fraim  
Virginia Zoo Hospital Groundbreaking  
Friday, April 20, 2012  
5:30 PM**

It's good to be with everyone this afternoon, I appreciate the opportunity to join you at the groundbreaking for the newest addition to the Virginia Zoo – the Veterinary Hospital and Animal Wellness Campus.

Let me also welcome you, Jim. It's good to see you, and we're glad you were able to come down to be with us for the evening.

The Zoo has been on an amazing journey over the last 10 years or so. The changes have been so remarkable that it's hard to remember just how things used to look here. I think we would all agree that what's been accomplished at the Zoo shows what can happen when you have a good plan and when that plan has broad support from the community.

As the first major step towards transforming the Zoo, the African Okavango Delta exhibit inspired us all to work even harder to implement the next stage of the plan which, of course, was the Trail of the Tiger. With generous support from Mr. Batten, from the Zoo Society and from businesses and individuals across the city and the region, Trail of the Tiger enabled the Virginia Zoo to become a world-class zoological institution solidly at the forefront as one of America's best medium size zoos.

These improvements brought into focus the need for a new and larger facility to provide medical care for a much larger animal population. I'm pleased to say that the new hospital and wellness campus will not only meet this need, it will also ensure the Zoo maintains its accreditation with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. So the city is pleased to be a partner with the Zoo in providing this new facility which will also itself become a new visitor attraction.

Something we've learned in making these improvements is that growing a world-class Zoo adds significantly to the City's and region's quality of life, and also acts as an economic driver. Case in point – last year the Zoo drew over half-a-million visitors – a 23% increase - and saw its revenue grow by 40%.

So on behalf of the City, I want to congratulate the Zoo Society, Greg Bockheim and everyone involved in the great success story that is the Virginia Zoo, I look forward to coming back to help cut the ribbon on the new hospital.